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THE GREY.
MOTHER.
• OTHER POEMS •
• BEING •
SONGS OF EMPIRE.



• BY • L •
• MACLEAN WATT •

BRIEF

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LONDON

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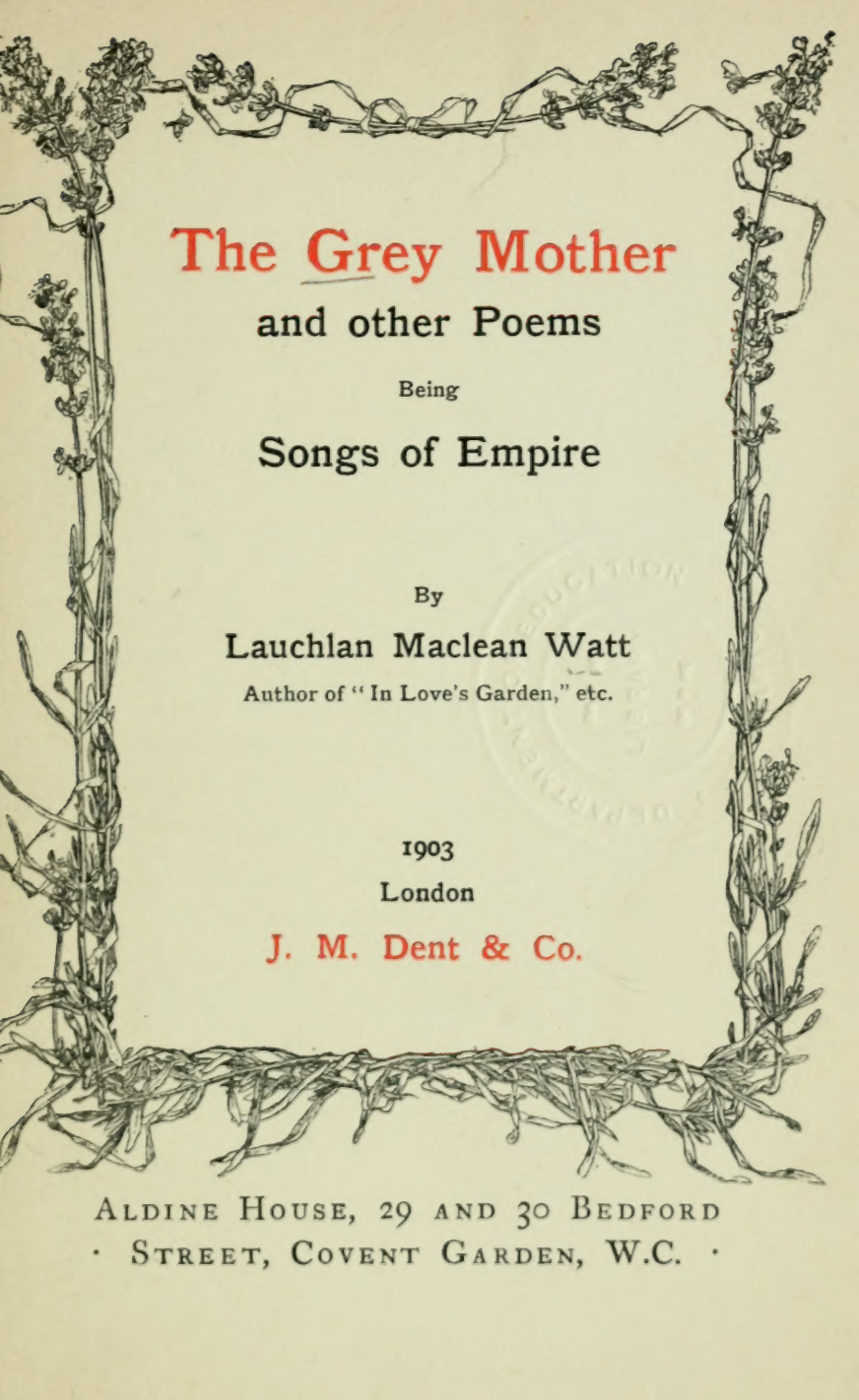




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The Grey Mother

And other Poems



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and other Poems

Being

Songs of Empire

By

Lauchlan Maclean Watt

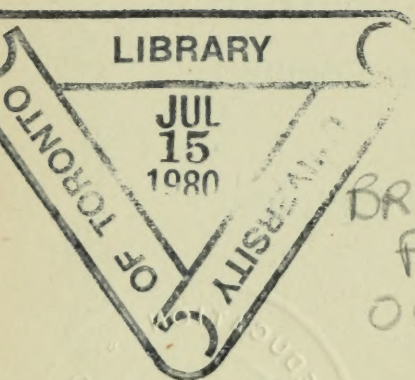
Author of "In Love's Garden," etc.

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*Like spray of the drifting sea,
Blown on the breath of the winds are we,—
Wide, wide,
On the world-swung tide,
All lands we dare,
And everywhere
The salt of our passion the sand has dyed.*

*With clang and cry,
'Neath every sky,
Through laughter and sobbing,
Through silence and throbbing,
Our spirit has past :
Yet still, at last,
To us is it ever most sweet,
To seek again
From the fields of pain
The rest at our mother's feet.*

TO THOSE WHO MADE
AND HELP TO KEEP
THE EMPIRE GREAT AND FREE.

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THE GREY MOTHER

Lo, how they come to me,
Long through the night I call them,—
Ah, how they turn to me.

East and South my children scatter,
North and West the world they wander,

Yet they come back to me,
Come, with their brave hearts beating,
Longing to die for me,

Me, the grey, old, weary mother,
Throned amid the Northern waters,

Where they have died for me,
Died with their songs around me,
Girding my shores for me.

Narrow was my dwelling for them,
Homes they builded o'er the ocean,

Yet they leave all for me,
Hearing their mother calling,
Bringing their lives for me.

Up from South seas swiftly sailing,
Out from under stars I know not,

Come they to fight for me,
Sons of the sons I nurtured ;
God keep them safe for me !

Long ago their fathers saved me,
Died for me among the heather,

Now they come back to me,
Come, in their children's children—
Brave of the brave for me.

In the wilds and waves they slumber,
Deep they slumber in the deserts,

Rise they from graves for me,
Graves where they lay forgotten,
Shades of the brave for me. . . .

Yet my soul is veiled in sadness,
For I see them fall and perish,

Strewing the hills for me,
Claiming the world in dying,
Bought with their blood for me.

Hear the grey, old, Northern mother,
Blessing now her dying children,—

God keep you safe for me,
Christ watch you in your sleeping,
Where ye have died for me.

And when God's own slogan soundeth,
All the dead world's dust awaking,

Ah, will ye look for me?
Bravely we'll stand together—
I and my sons with me.

A SONG OF EMPIRE

O THOU, the Ocean's bride,
A monarch throned
Above the sleepless tide
Which round thy feet these countless ages
moaned,—
What are our songs to thee,
Thou that hast for thine own
The song of the sounding sea,
And the scream of the winds from each
corner of wide heaven blown,
And the praise and the pride of the dead
whom thy glorious years have
known?—
Thou, whom God, in the morn
When thou wast born,

Bade rise from the surge and the surf and the
breakers' roar,

And set above thee the changing sky,

Where the sun and the stars, alternate,
quicken and die,

And the eagles of empire soar . . .

He set thy feet on the sands,

And thy gaze o'er the waters free,

And He said, "I have need for thy
heart and hands,

And the earth has need for thee."

So, from that day,

Dim, faded, and far away,

When the fringe of the sobbing tide,

Lashed into foam, was dyed

With the deep hue of battle's purple wine,

A Destiny divine

Has toiled above us, moulding us to His
will,

Strengthening us, through struggle and
 conflict still,
 As at the first,
When Conquest, westward-driven, in fury
 on us burst,
Found us, and tried to break us, being
 free,
And stirred along our shores the song of
 Liberty.

Out of the misty Morning-land, unknown,
O'er which Forgetfulness has thrown
Impenetrable glooms, our fathers stept
 Into the light of that great dawn, to
 die,
When o'er their bodies swept,
 With triumphing cry,
 The invading host that came,
 Borne on the wave, and blown before
 the breeze,

To win and claim

Our grey land, set amid the encircling
seas.

They could not make us slaves :

We scorned their chains—

We left our dead asleep beside the waves,

We left the plains,

And made the hills our battlements, the
dense

Dark midnights of the forest our defence,

With marshes girdled round,—

There for our Britain made our stubborn
stand,

And so the indomitable Roman found

A foe unvanquished in our Northern land.

Then, when the Romans' glory, on the wane,

Out of our waters passed, and died away

In stormy splendours, flung o'er seas
afar,

Their setting star

Brought nigh the breaking of our later
day,

With wildest brood of war

Like desolating rain

Out of the sea-fogs dashed upon our
shores,

With flash of shield and spear, and clang
of conquering oars.

And on, through weary strife,

With many a star of hope to darkness
hurled,

Wove they the wondrous web of their
races' life

Whose weaving has circled the world.

For the heart of us deepened and grew,
In the conflicts of kings,

In the breasting of Ocean's foam,
In the winning and holding of home,
In the hardship of things ;
Till at last, when we heard and knew
That the gates of the world were wide,
And far o'er the waters, broad and blue,
In the way of the drifting tide,
Westward, westward, beyond the sunset's
haze,
Lay golden dreams and days,
And treasure and fame for the ready hand
that gathers,
Like sea-birds sped our souls upon the
breeze,—
Out from the door of England went the
white sails of our fathers,
And the embattled poops of Britain were seen
on all the seas.

Spain, proud Spain,
Dragging her darksome chain

Through our own free channels of England,
And out on the Western Main,
Burned with flame of her hate,
Froze with the fear of the grave,
For our flag was the shadow of Fate
To her fame on the wave.
And she prayed for a breath of God to
blow,
And scatter us, out on the seas,
And sweep from the deep, on a judgment
breeze,
The sails that saddened her so.

For we grappled her, ship to ship—we fought
her, one to a fleet,—
God and our banner above us, what knew
we of dread?
Sometimes we drove her, blinded, through
battle's baleful sleet,
And sometimes, dying and dead,

The war-lashed waters engulfed us, riven
and shattered and rent,
But the pledge of our fathers firm at the
mast,
Unconquered in pride, as we went,
When out of the strife we passed,
To our ocean sleep,
To the silences down in the
deep . . .
They marvelled — they could not break
us,
All vain were battle and breeze,
Nor storm nor death could shake us,
Nor crush us out of the seas.

Fling out the flag, let it flutter,
Tost like a bird on the billow, free let it
blow on the blast ;
'Tis more than songs can utter—
'Tis To-day—'Tis the Past,—

'Tis the hope of the days that are veiled, 'tis
the badge of our pride,
Stained with the blood of our triumphs, and
tears for the brave who have died.

Like a dream of the dawn it led us, by ways
we never knew,
Filling our sails
With the freshening gales,
With the Trade Winds when they blew ;
Till lands afar were peopled by the children
of our race,
In darkness and trial remembering still the
Northern mother's face ;
And forests far remote, and desolate plains
Echo familiar strains,
Learned long ago, from love, in distant
years,
Where only in dreams
The home-light gleams
Through blinding mist of tears.

With windows o'er all waters opening
 wide,
And doors for all the world,
 From which our sea-born blood,
 Throbbing a martial music o'er the
 flood,
Drew us across the tide,
 In labour and in sleep
 We drifted through the deep,
Till round the earth our sheltering flag is
 furled.

Far have we followed the gleam, in eager
 flight,
Like an omen-bird through the night,
 O'er wailing, unknown waters, and dim,
 untrodden lands.
Blown like the clouds, and drifting like the
 spray,
Our wandering dust has sped, until, to-day,

The wave-borne seed has grown, in desert
places,
A stalwart forest of sons, with manly
graces ;
Our gladness stirs their loyal hearts to song,
And, in our anguish, to their shores they
throng,
Outstretching helpful hands.

Great Australasia, wide-eyed, with the
tan
Of blazing Noon upon her, as she
turns
Her long gaze homewards, where her dreams
began,
With yearning love that still deep in her
burns,
Glad, when she hears the old voice sudden
cry,
To follow the northward call, and die.

India, clothed with mystery, crowned with
 peace out of pain,
Wearing yet over her heart the deep, sad,
 shuddering stain
 Which all the ages shall not wipe
 away,
Sits in our shadow shielded, and with her
 grief confest,
 Sharing the price of Empire, which we pay
With blood of our truest and best.

And Africa, lone in her deserts, weirdest of
 lands,
 Wringing her hands
By low graves left in the grasses ;
Counting the time as it passes,
 Saying, "How long ?"
Praying, "O God, is it ages yet,
Ere human hearts forget,
 And sorrow be merged in song ?"

And Canada, swathed in stillness of her
snows,

Or forest twilights, where the broad-axe
swings

Its song of opening pathways, as it
rings

A message to all who follow, that it goes
Seeking the fertile cornlands of the West,
And fields of rest.

And on, through haunted depths of shadowing
pines,

To where the frozen North, in glimmering
gloaming shines,

Or soft Pacific sighs ;

And Westward still in chase of Day, that
dies,

But sinks not to his sleep,—

Wooing us on to follow in his wake,

Till, ere our race is run,

We overtake
The swift course of the sun,
And see him, radiant, rise,
Kissing our flag to beauty in all skies,
And hailing our ships that sweep
Across the crested waves that
farthest break
Round Islands of the Deep.

O Name our Fathers fell for—Land of
pride,
Torn out of Europe's side,
And set, alone and free,
Amidst the sea,
These are thine own, and these thy children
share
The burden of thy conquests and thy
care ;
Proud commonwealths and states, yet, at thy
call,
The one flag leads them all ;

And whoso stirs against thee war's alarms
Must face a world in arms.

Yet not the sword alone true Empire
makes.

Up like a rock amid the storm she stands,
And stills the passion-blast that breaks
With ruin o'er sad lands.

Her shadow falls, like God's great night of
doom,

To drive Oppression, lonely, to his grave ;
Her hand, scarred like an angel's, gropes
through gloom,

Loosening the iron bands that bind the
slave . . .

Opening through ancient night
Wide ways for Love to enter, bearing light ;
Ringing from sea to sea
Sweet Avon's song, and the surge of
Galilee—

The throb of Science, and the pulse of
Thought,

The power of all who wrought
And gave their labours, that the race might
rise

From carnage to the kingdom of the wise ;
Strong with God's yearnings, — out of
sundered lands

Linking brave hands
Around the world—clothed in eternal youth,
Led by the glow of Freedom, Love, and
Truth.

Heavy the cross it wins, and none may
bear

Its ceaseless care,
Kinglike, toward earth's setting,
The Power unseen forgetting,
Whose gaze beholds the glories of the
proud
Still shadowed by a shroud.

So suffer not our hearts, O God of Hosts,
To crown our days with garlands of our
pride,
Or count our greatness by the trampled
coasts,
And vanquished kingdoms grappled to
our side ;
But by our service, by our toil and pain,
By our true standing guard for Freedom's
sake,
And light for others, though no glory
break
Across our watch and drift about the main.

For still we hear, where'er our arms are
led,
The voices of earth's mightiest ages dead,
With warning, blown from dim worlds far
away,
That fame is futile, and the hour grows
late,

And we with dread, amidst our toilings,
wait
The touch upon the shoulder, which shall
say,
“The game is ended. Leave it, and step
down,
And let another take thy place and crown.”

So keep us lowly, in the day of power,
As men who wait the clanging of that hour
Which brings the judgment-knock upon
the door;
For all shall pass in which our spirits trust,
And we go daily gravewards, through the
dust
Of Empires which have been, and are no
more.

COMRADES

ARE you lying out under the stars, where the
sleet of hell on your face

Slew you, my brother, my more than
brother, the man whom I love,

And the seas and the deserts between us, and
no stone on your sleeping place,

And a pitiless sky, unknown, looking down
from above ?

No more by the loch in the mountains, afar
away,

Shall we walk and talk while the gloaming
lies on the lea ;

No more, when the boat speeds out to the
islands beyond the bay,

Shall you and I together go sailing over
the sea.

Ah ! never again shall we talk of the brave,
and dream of brave deeds done,
When a glamour the world has lost for
evermore
Lingered along the land, while our hearts
beat loving as one,
We twain, where the waters sang with
laughter upon the shore.

For now you are one of the brave who are
laid to rest,
Where you turned, with your face to the
foe and the wind in your hair ;
And now you are quiet for ever with the
green grass over your breast,
And I would, oh I would, my heart, I were
with you there.

That we twain had but stood together when
the last wild cry was made,

That our hands had been clasped in troth
and our love confessed,
That together we'd lain where they'd find
us when the dreary play was played,
And the same grave folded us, waiting for
God. . . . 'Twere best.

Kind heart, is it long, I wonder, till all is
done?

Shall we, who are left to be weary, wait
long for the waking?

Shall we seek each other again in the rising
sun

And know, as of old we knew, in the grey
dawn's breaking?

SONG OF THE CROWNING OF KINGS

HERE, all alone in the dark,
While the stars are dying,
My soul grows still, and I hark
To the voice of the sea-winds crying
From far away, where, low on the long-
ridged sands,
The tired grey sea beats out his time-old song
with weary hands.
And, as I listen, up from the ghostly
street,
I hear the throb of a thousand marching
feet,

And ever, as they come,
The faint, dull, guiding pulse of a
distant drum.

The windows are silent all, and darkened,
the lights are gone:
And the dying starlight flickers, dimly
wan,
But I know that the town is full of the
shadows of marching men,
Though never a trace of their passing
shall wait the dawn,
And never on earth, except in dream, shall
their faces gleam again.

And my soul is caught from its stillness,
And the stars awake in the night,
And the winds, from the waste and the waters,
Cry, half in joy and in fright :

“ Who are ye, ghostly marchers,
And whence do your squadrons come,
And your companies pressing onward
To the beat of a phantom drum ? ”

“ We are the dead of England :
Our dust is under the leas.
They buried us deep, in our battle-sleep,
They plunged us down in the seas.
We are the brave of England,
We fought for the bristling breach,
And died that our brothers might climb
on our bones,
And carry the flag where we could not
reach. . . .
We went down in the waste of waters :
We grappled the foe on ships . . .
In mist and smoke, where battle broke,—
And her name was on our lips.
Living or dying,
Our flag still flying,

Where our hands had nailed it fast,
We fell for the might of England,
And we were not her last.

“Never a cannon’s booming,
Never a battle’s roar,
Never the marching of armies
Thundrous, along the shore,
But it stirred us in our sleeping,
And we turned in our nameless bed,
For we knew there were wars for England,
And we were England’s dead . . .
We have heard . . . we have burst our
prison,
For a king’s to be hailed, and crowned,
We have waked for a while and risen
To gather, and guard him round.
For a king’s to be crowned in the
Minster,
And the bravest should be there ;

The living and dead of England
Her sorrows and joys must share."

Beat, O phantom drums of the dead—O
bravely, proudly beat.
There's never a sea
But set you free,
O dead with the marching feet!
For the North and the South
Had sealed your mouth,
And the sundered East and West
Had all looked down
From their starry crown,
Above you, in your rest.

Ye girdled the globe for England,
Ye fought for her and God.

Dust of the old, grey, wave-worn
 isles,

Ye blew her name abroad.

Come back, and stand for England,

Ye that were true and tried :

We need the brave from the field and
 the wave

To teach us how ye died ! . . .

Ah, 'tis no crown of a witling,

 This crown of ours :

Iron and gold the meed of it,

Blood of the best the seed of it :

 No path of flowers

Men walked in till they won it. Alfred
 wight

Wrested it back, with blade of peerless
 might

 From the invaders' hand,

And set his land
Fair by the waters, Godwards, seeking
light.

Long was the hammering at it, early and late,
Until it grew
The treasure of our islands, with the blue
Engirdling waters round it for its
guard :

And hot and hard
The anvil of its shaping. Many a day,
The smiths who toiled till evening, in
the breaking
Of grey dawns out of darkness, silent lay,
For ever weary with the toil of
making.

Never a morning's dawn but wakeful eyes
Saw the day rise

Out of the shimmering sea.

Never night darkened, but an anxious gaze
Looked through the deepening haze,

Wondering of days to be.

Heavy the burden of it on the brows

Of kings, and on the hearts of weary
folk,

Till, out of troubled ages,

Gladness broke.

Ah, 'tis no empty fluttering of a dream,

Our flag's proud gleam :

Many and tired the fingers that have sewn it,

Seam by seam,

Staining it with life's crimson, and the
blue

Of Northern skies and seas, till winds
have blown it

Wider than all their wonder and their
dream.

Thin red lines of pulsing lives were the
thread of it,
Pulsing lives that bled away for its sake
beneath the spread of it,
Till the wide seas knew it,
And the winds of the wide world
blew it,
And the host of England followed the flag
till earth trembled under the tread
of it.

Up with it into the sky.
Let it blow abroad, let its message
fly
Like the grey gull, over the deep,
As glad and free.
There are names of pride emblazoned on
every fold,
But deeper, more dear than ever was
script in gold,

Names that can never sleep,
Though only the heart of love and the
eye of God can see.

Sad, ah sad was the heart of us, when the
word
We feared to hear, came fluttering like
a bird
Blown, out of the dark, against our
faces,
How she, to us and all the nations
dear,
Mother and queen, to all her children
near,
Lowly, and crowned with love and
tenderest graces,
Lay at the gate of peace,
Beating with feeble fingers for release,
To seek her dead, afar in heavenly
places :

Till the great passing-bell
Rang through the night to tell
O'er waking shore and sea,
The soul of England's greatest queen from
earth was free.

Sad was the spell that stole across the waves
As her spirit passed, . . .
The red flag drooped from the mast,
And thunders throbbed their sorrows o'er
the tide.

Far through the bush it sped,
Like a swift-footed Sorrow, with silent
tread,
Waking the sleepers to tell them, "She is
dead."

And the dawn bore it wide
Over the waters,
Till, with a weary wail it reached the shores,
Crying its message in at the seaward-opening
doors,

Where England's sons and daughters,
Borne far in ships, had built them homes and
 graves.

Now who is the king for the crown that fell
 from her hand,

 The crown of our land,
And our Empire wide-world wide,
Where the circling stars, unsetting, ever
 behold

 The gleam of our sails on the tide :
And the glittering day, from the shadows
 unrolled,

Each dawning, somewhere, kisses our flag
 to gold ?

Son of the mother we loved, we look to
 thee,—

Our king by thy mother's name, our king
 to be,

Lifting the crown she left thee, to thy lips,
To win with her name a glory from Time
which time shall never eclipse.

Now who is the king whose glory shall not
die,—

Whose coronet, crushed and shattered shall
not lie

In dust of shame, out in the trampling street,
Scorned by the heedless feet

That spurn and pass it by?

Earth has her hour for kingship still, and
the day

For crowning of truth can fade not ever
away.

Still do her multitudes wait

For the knock of the hand of her king
on her palace gate.

He is the king whose power shall be
Upheld by angels three,

Beside his throne—

Strength, pity, and love,

Lifting his life above

The mighty mockeries making
misery moan,

The little dreams that hold the world
in fee . . .

Strength, to whose brave right
hand 'tis given

To bring to stillness all earth's din and
the clang that would silence
heaven;

And, cleaving clash and noise,
Fetch once again to weary hearts the music
of God's voice. . . .

Pity, too, clothed in strength more strong
than steel,

Stretching her gaze,
Like the smile of dawn, through darkness
and dismal haze,

To wake the heartless and those who
know no hope,

Making them feel
Old impulses half-forgotten, and ways of
boundless scope,
Where their tired feet, from time-long
shackles free,
May move where music meets them, stir-
ring new dreams by shore and
sea. . . .
Love, too, greatest of angels born of
God,
Leaving the throne, to walk where
shadow lies,
Kissing to joy the tears of darkened
eyes,
And gathering into song all saddening
cries,
And making a triumphing gladness grow
where sorrow in darkness trod :
Till peace springs near and far,
Star merging into star,
Till a day like Christ's steals over the
midnight bar,

And the tide of a people's contented
joy breaks singing around the
throne,

Where, in oblivion swathed, as in a
shroud,

Dead and forgotten shall sink the cruel
and proud

And tyranny have no name,

And the shaming be crushed with
shame,

And be unknown :

But the loving and lovely in dream and
deed

Have love shook into their days,
And angels of peace their feet shall
lead

By blossoming ways

No more to bleed.

Great shall that monarch be,

Great on the shore, and the sea ;

And the nations near and far,

Shall see his star,

And know that the day of darkness
now is done,
And wait for the rising sun,
That bringeth the days to be.
Great, God-giftedly great,
On him shall wait
The ragged and poor, the spangled
and proud in state,
The nameless, the lost, the lone,—
The noble, the true, the renowned,
Alike with the lorn, the unpitied, for-
gotten, new-named, new-found,
Lifted by pity and strength and love to the
shade and the shield of his throne.
Bravest and best girdling him round,
By hands out of darkness, and hands out
of brightness crowned,
True is that king in his power,
To him no hell comes crying,
Hate for him has no hour,
And no calendar holds the star of his
dynasty's dying. . . .

O king, thine is the gift and glory
Of all our island story,—
Heaven help thee, guard it well,
That still in dawns unborn, mothers to
babes shall tell
Of thee, and kingship true,
Of the love men bore thee at home,
and away o'er the waters blue,
And in ships and in desert places, where the
sons of the grey land roam,
Bearing afar
The name of the land their mother, up
under the lone north star,
The land that men call home,
Telling thy fame with pride,
Son of a hundred kings, yet most the son
of her who died.

And the love of the living and dead
Puts the crown of grace on the head
Of the lady who stands by thee,—
The lily who, over the sea,

Out of old gardens of heroes, her loveliness
bore

Here, to our island-shore,
From the sea-king's city set by the
distant tide,

To shine by thy side,—
Mother of kings and queens in the days to
be.

Still, though the song of the years
Has brought to her laughter, and
sorrow, and tears,

The lips of her people praise,
And the hearts of the nations love
her,

And prayers, like wings, upraise
A shadow of peace above her. . . .

Lone isles, isles belov'd, crown'd with the
prayers of the free,

Throned on the waters, backed by the
mountains, gazing over the sea—

Ye, for whose sake
Brave spirits brake,
For whom our fathers fell,
In stranger climes,
In danger times,
Or where deep-sea billows swell . . .
Lone rocks at whose feet
The wan tides meet,
And the surges break and sing,
Stand firm as of yore,
For the race ye bore,
And the man ye have crowned as king.
The shades of the dead are round
you . . .
The prayers of the dead have
bound you,
And wherever the lone seas beat and cry,
From the shores of the world your
sons are ready
To come at your call, and, calm
and steady,
If need be, die. . . .

Gather them in, O mother of men, gather
them close to your feet,

They are blown far and wide

O'er the broad sea's tide,

But the name of their mother is
sweet . . .

And, when the pale day breaks,

And the earth affrighted, shakes

With thunder, and cries of war, and
battle-drums,

And through the distant hills,

Rumblings, shall growl the voice
of coming ills,

Shout, when you see how the long brave line
of your wandering children
comes.

THE VOLUNTEER

THROUGH the night I hear the tramp of
eager feet,
They are moving o'er the mountain and the
lea;
And their marching ever comes,
With the beat of battle-drums,
To glory or to death for thee.

'Tis the land I love as dearly as my
life . . .

Grey and green, and flecked with heather,
fair and free.

Ah, sad mother of our race,
We will proudly set our face
To glory or to death for thee.

And the weary waves are wailing round her
feet ;

Crooning dirges for the graves across the sea ;

And she's sobbing through the night—

“ Ah, the brave that fought the fight,
To glory or to death for me.”

Clang the battle-song of Britain from the
hills. . . .

Sons of men who faced the serried world are
we.

Shake the banner overhead,

And the earth shall feel our tread,

To glory or to death for thee.

Leave the furrow all unfinished, to the
plough—

Leave the lonely cattle lowing on the lea ;

For she's calling night and day,

“ Oh my children, come away
To glory or to death for me.”

There are some of us who go for ever-
more . . .

Ne'er the faces by the fire again we'll see,
But we gladly join the chorus
Of the brave who passed before us
To glory or to death for thee.

For we follow where the voice of Freedom
calls,

Where the winds of Freedom flutter o'er the
sea ;

And we follow o'er the wave
All the unforgotten brave,
To glory or to death for thee.

AFRICA

OUT of the sand-blown East, the soul of
Gordon awaking,
Stirred by the clang and clash and triumph
cries,
Hails, with rapture heroic, the dawn of a
new day breaking,
Where, in the dim, grey glimmer, the
sorrow of Afric dies.

Up from the age-long night the gloom and
the grief are lifting,
Over the fear-bound desert the hopes of a
new day smile,

Ever, before our breath, for God, the breath
of slavery drifting,
And the feet of Freedom fording the mists
of the mystery-folded Nile.

Blood we give for our brothers' blood—life we
give for their dying,
Graves we sow that love may grow where
the tyrant left his chains,
And the dust of our dust we give in trust,
to the days that to-day are crying,
Over the sea, for the sword of the free
to furrow for God, the plains . . .

O lone grey land of the Northern crags, clear
over the broad seas gleaming !
O soul, made strong by the deathless song
of the foam-drift and the waves !

With thy flag unfurled, we face the world—
we fear not the eagles' screaming,
But, in battle and birth, we bind the earth
to thee and thy children's graves.

On the great God's breath, down the ways
of death, we are blown, and our
angels shrive us—
Over the desert, over the crags, we move,
through battle hurled,
And never a foot of man or brute, from the
onward track shall drive us,
Till we write thy name across the shame
that darkens the day of the world.

NEWS OF BATTLE IN BRITAIN,
55 B.C.

FAR in the hills we found a lonely cave,
Deep wrapt in darkness, with the misty
 crag
Ranked round it like a guard of sleepless
 hosts;
Where echoing winds, and plunge of wintry
 streams,
Unending, filled the heart with mystic woe.
 Then flung we down our armour and
 our spears;
Worn with our flight, and fasting—fain to
 rest:
Yet aye vague tremors o'er our souls would
 flit,

54 NEWS OF BATTLE IN BRITAIN

As flickering glint o'er warmen's dinted
helms,

By watchfires in the wakeful camps at night.

At threshold of our cavern's hall of
gloom,

We heaped dry logs, and set the crackling
blaze

A-leap from twig to twig; and some con-
versed

In drowsy undertone, while, weary worn,

Some slumbered, frowning, muttering, in
their sleep;

But Fancy, tireless, held mine eyes from
dream.

The host of nightly stars, procession
vast,

Across the heavens stretched wide in
wondrous maze,

Held silent watch: and aye, methought, a
smile,

Sorrowing, yet loving, tinged the brow of
heaven,

As though she loved but sorrowed in her love,
For these our kingly hills, our silent glens.

Sudden, upon the turning-hour of night,
The witching calm was broken by a sound
Of hurrying feet along the mountain track,
That set a pebble dance from ledge to ledge,
Down many a foot—a plunge of headlong
fear—

To the weird bosom of the stream below ;
And soon upon the platform of our cave,
Wild, haggard, lone, and outcast, he ap-
peared—

This flying phantom through the midnight's
gloom.

Panting and faint he stood, and silent we
Beheld him. Wild and long his beard of
snow—

His locks unkempt—distraught his eyes of
flame—

56 NEWS OF BATTLE IN BRITAIN

All rent his raiment—scarred his wrinkled
face—

His brow all bare—and his poor, naked
feet,

Where the stained sandals, worn with cease-
less flight,

Gave to the jagged pebbles savage play,
Agape with sores, blood oozing where he
stood.

Awhile his dry lips stirred withouten
speech,

Till, gaining utterance, wildly flowed his
words :

“ Quench, O ye Britons, sons of free-
born sires,

Quench now your blaze ! No more your hills’
high sheen

Across the waters gleaming, shall display
The ramparts of Britannia ’gainst her foes !

Here, mad with fury, stumbling, bleed-
ing, torn

With grief and rage, I bear myself along,
Searching these valleys and those hoary peaks
For Death to blind my weary tearless eyes.

For never may mine orbs behold again
The fields that they have looked on, being
free,—

The kingly cliffs that guard our island
shores,—

The hurrying waters, blue and flaked with
foam,

Which nevermore my soul may hope to see,
Save with the taint of slavery on my brow.

With seven brave sons, flower of their
father's heart,

I stood in rank of battle on our sands,
And watched the great war-galleys catch the
breeze,

That bore them on to our devoted shores.

On came they, like a march of old sea-
kings:

58 NEWS OF BATTLE IN BRITAIN

And at each stroke of their long banks of oars,
A thousand shields flashed to the answering
foam.

On came they : but the waves that wash
our coast,

Impatient, and in anger swept them back,
Nor durst their brood of warriors leap ashore,
Till one who bore a standard in his hand,
Leapt boldly in the whirling foam-lashed
waves ;

Then all his fellows followed in his train,
And we opposed them, battling in the surge.

Long was our strife, but heaven opposed
our arms :

Vain all our valour !—as the North Sea waves
Wash o'er our crags, their warriors o'er us
swept !

And my brave children, by the wailing foam
Lie stiff and stark, their dead hands clutching
still

The blade that nought availed them—
guarding on,

In silence, Britain's shores from hostile bands ;
 Their white, dead faces gazing to the skies,
 With dull eyes reading yet a sad reproach
 To heaven that fought against us in the
 fray.

No more for me the joy of our high
 deeds.

Death shuns my path—my feet o'ertake him
 never ;

Yet, though we pass, so Rome herself shall
 fade,

As yon fair stars must droop their flame and
 die.

Lost 'mid lone peaks, high-towering to the
 heavens,

Wrapt in my griefs, I'll die the death of one
 Who feeds his sated soul with fruitless woe.

Go, Britons ! Quench your blaze ! your
 name is dead !

Dead is the freedom of our western world !
 Ah ! vain the fleeting meed of mortal breath,
 The name of life, if Freedom be not there !

60 NEWS OF BATTLE IN BRITAIN

Your land is not your own; your kings,
your pride,

Low in the dust are humbled, passed away!

Your children cringe beneath a stranger's
hand,

Slaves under Rome's proud heel, and Rome's
high scorn!"—

So spake he, and a moment paused and
sighed;

Then, ere our lips were oped to speak one
word,

He turned, and straightway plunging in the
gloom,

He left us Slaves to Roman Cæsar's scorn!

PEACE

Now, while the world is glad from sea to
sea

That heaven's white angel walks her
ways again

With stillness, bringing rest to weary
men,

And hope, all fair for dreams of days to
be,

Yet comes a pang of grief 'midst joy to
me,

Remembering low green mounds that
silent lie,

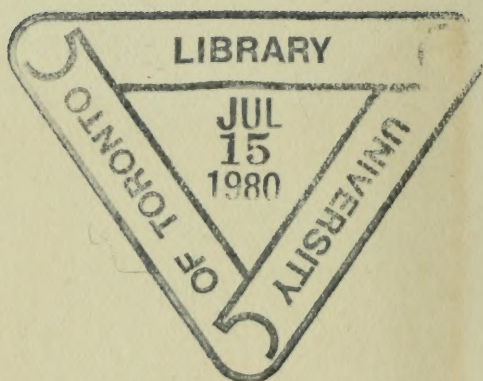
Above whose quiet dead the soft winds
sigh

Songs full of sobbing tones continually.

They do not hear the merry church bells
ring,
Nor join they in the city's triumph throng,
Yet, somehow, in the desert, in their
grave,
Surely, I think, they feel the eternal swing
And surge of seas that shout their names
along
The shores of Empire which they died
to save.

*Thanks are due to the Proprietors of
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